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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000707

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND INL  
DEA FOR OF, OFF  
CDR USPACOM FOR FPA

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SUBJECT: BURMA'S OPIUM FIELDS -- GOING, GOING, ....

REF: RANGOON 575

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez. Reason: 1.5 (d).

11. (C) Summary: According to information presented by UNODC's Resident Representative, Burma eliminated approximately one-quarter of its opium fields in 2003. According to UNODC's latest survey, the acreage under opium cultivation in Burma in 2003 totaled only 62,100 hectares, down 24 percent from 2002. The reduction, according to UNODC, was equivalent to the entire current crop in Laos. End Summary.

#### Acreage under Cultivation

12. (C) UNODC will release its worldwide opium survey in New York next week. In a pre-brief on June 13, UNODC's Resident Representative told the Chief of Mission that opium cultivation in Burma had again declined radically. According to UNODC's survey, the acreage under opium cultivation in Burma in 2003 totaled only 62,100 hectares, down 24 percent from 2002 and more than 60 percent from the 163,000 hectares planted in Burma in 1996. The Resident Representative noted that the reduction in acreage under cultivation in Burma in 2003 was equivalent to Laos' entire current crop.

13. (C) According to UNODC's numbers, the reduction was sharpest in northern Shan State, where acreage under opium cultivation was down 45 percent. In eastern Shan state, the reduction was 26 percent; in southern Shan State 19 percent. Only in the Wa territories did acreage under cultivation increase. While the acreage under opium cultivation was down in the Wa Alternative Development Project area around Mong Yang and Mong Pawk (by about 12 percent), in the Wa territories as a whole, acreage under cultivation was up 21 percent to 21,300 hectares (i.e., about one-third of Burma's total production.)

#### Yield/Hectare

14. (C) Largely offsetting the decline in acreage, however, was a sharp increase in yield, thanks to excellent weather. According to UNODC, the yield/hectare throughout Burma was up about 27 percent from 10.2 kilograms per hectare to 12.9 kilograms per hectare. As with acreage under cultivation, yields were also highest in the Wa territories at about 16.1 kilograms per hectare.

#### Production

15. (C) Overall production, finally, came in at about par with 2002, as increased yields per hectare approximately offset the decline in acreage under cultivation. According to UNODC's numbers, Burma produced about 810 metric tons of opium in 2003, down only marginally from the 828 metric tons UNODC estimated in 2002.

#### Comment

16. (C) A couple of points stand out from UNODC's survey. First, the weather for opium production was excellent for opium production in Burma in 2003. There was no drought. Yet acreage under production declined radically, most logically as a result of government efforts.

17. (C) Secondly, in 2003, the government held the cease-fire groups to their pledges regarding opium. In fact the largest declines in 2003 took place in territories controlled by the Peng Kya Shin's Kokang Chinese, which had pledged to be out of opium production by 2000, and then reneged. In 2003, thanks to Burmese government pressure, the acreage under cultivation in the Kokang Chinese capital district of Lawkai was cut to barely 20 percent of its 2002 level.

18. (C) Finally, in 2005 the government will get another opportunity to show if it is really ready to take on the the ceasefire groups. As matters now stand, 2005 is to be the last year of opium production in the Wa territories. End Comment.

Martinez